

At the time of the observation, the only description and illustration available to us depicted a bird with no buff barring on the upperparts and quoted a length of 76 cm⁵. The birds observed were conspicuously barred buff and black and also appeared shorter than 76 cm, although they were usually seen with necks retracted. An examination of specimens in the British Museum (Natural History), Tring showed considerable variation in the width of buff barring, from 3–10 mm. The length from bill-tip to tail-tip also varied markedly, more so than could be expected from differences in skin preparation. The largest, a male, was 81 cm; the smallest, a female, was just 56 cm. The white crest was not noted in the field but in the specimens examined, the white feathers were almost entirely overlaid by darker ones and not at all prominent. On neither occasion were any vocalisations heard; both observations occurred between 08.15 hr and 11.30 hr.

Rather surprisingly, only one other nest of this species has been described. Brosset¹ was shown a nest in Gabon on 22 January 1971, which was also situated on branches overhanging a creek, at a height of six m. This nest contained one egg and the adult proved difficult to see, moving away at the approach of observers, who had to conceal themselves for long periods in order to identify the bird.

Although little is currently known about the species' breeding biology, it is said to coincide with the rainy season and to be from May–July in the west of its range and November–January in the east^{2,3}. This, however, conflicts with a laying date of September–October quoted for Sierra Leone^{2,3} and our Gambian observations. The distribution of this species is in equatorial rain forest between 8°N–5°S and 13°W–

25°E, from Sierra Leone east to Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon and the former Zaïre^{2,3}. The nearest part of its known range to The Gambia is Sierra Leone, c640 km to the south-west. This is not only the first breeding record in The Gambia but also the first documented record, although a previously rejected claim from 1982¹ should perhaps now be re-examined. The records have been submitted to The Gambia Ornithological Society Records Committee. Such an unobtrusive and retiring species, notoriously difficult to observe in its preferred habitat of dense riverine forest^{2,3}, could easily be overlooked and it is possible that small populations exist elsewhere outside its known range.

Acknowledgements

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Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* in Ethiopia

Peter Clement

The recent reference to Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* in Ethiopia (*Bull. ABC* 2: 61–64) is overdue acknowledgement of the species' presence in north-east Africa, for there have been references to sightings of the species in Ethiopia since the early years of the present century. The earliest published reference is Reichenow⁵, who considered that the species might be a winter visitor but gave no details or locations. Zedlitz⁶ reported a sighting at Ela Bered (now Eritrea) in February 1908. The next records were 80 years later, in 1988, when it was included in a checklist of Ethiopian birds by F. Petretti¹. In view of

these records lacking substantive details, and that those in the early years of the 20th century may be based on hearsay, they are probably now best regarded as unproven.

Records in the late 1980s

The first of a series of recent sightings from the Bale Mountains, was of two adults and a subadult on 12–13 November 1988 (David Mills/Naturetrek). The following year there were two sightings – three individuals on several dates in November 1989 in the Bale Mountains National Park (David Mills/Naturetrek), and one



Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* being mobbed by Fan-tailed Raven *Corvus rhipidurus* (G. Neal)

near Debre Libanos (c180 km north of Addis Ababa) on 19 November 1989 (PC, Martin Davies/Cygnus). The following year, two birds were again seen in November, in the Bale Mountains National Park (Jonathan Eames/Naturetrek).

There were no further sightings owing to the civil war, which engulfed most of northern Ethiopia and the now independent Eritrea, until 1993, when ecotourism tentatively recommenced. However, two unpublished and undated records from 1992–93 by M. Clouet and C. Barrau refer to breeding in the Bale Mountains (but without further details these reports must be regarded as uncertain). In 1993 there were several sightings, again in November, in the Bale Mountains National Park (Naturetrek). In 1994, there were three separate records of birds in the Bale Mountains: two in October (S. Rooke, S. Bayu), three immatures on the Sanetti Plateau (also Bale Mountains) on 8 November (S. Vaughan), and up to three birds on 19 November (Cliff Waller/Naturetrek). There were further sightings in the Bale Mountains by both Naturetrek and Cygnus groups in 1995. In the latter case, birds were seen on two days; on 3 December, an adult or subadult perched on a boulder on the Sanetti Plateau (the most frequent area of sightings within the Bale Mountains National Park), and on 5 December, a subadult watched and photographed in the western pass through the Bale Mountains (outside the National Park). This is probably the only photograph of the species in Africa south of the Sahara.

Interestingly, the bird on 5 December was seen hunting over steep-sided hills and grassy valleys. On one occasion, as it swooped low over a hillside, it disturbed a feeding flock of c50 Wattle Ibis *Bostrychia*

carunculata which took flight in panic, giving their hoarse croaking alarm. The scattering ibis flew down the valley in a loose and rapidly dispersing flock with the eagle above them. Swooping low, the eagle closed its wings and plummeted towards one of the ibis on the outer edge of the flock, which it hit, knocking it to the ground c10 m below. The eagle checked itself and landed close by the ibis, which was now struggling in the tall crop of ripening wheat in which it had crash-landed. It finally managed to right itself with the eagle appearing to be unaware of its close proximity, and took off seemingly unharmed, noisily cawing its alarm, in pursuit of the rest of the flock, with the eagle still on the ground. Shortly after, the eagle was seen overhead being pursued by a group of Fan-tailed Raven *Corvus rhipidurus*.

Identification

The photograph shows the typical shape and structure of Golden Eagle, a bird familiar to most observers in Europe and once its main features or characteristics – its jizz – are seen quite easy to identify. Its main features are the huge size, and in flight long wings and tail, the lower edge of the wings pinched-in at the base and a protruding head. The wingshape in flight is particularly distinctive; the primaries slightly narrower than the more bulging secondaries. The flight is also distinctive on long supple or elastic wings, with deep wingbeats and glides on very shallow or flat V, only the primary tips slightly upwardly tilted.

Identification from Imperial Eagle

Confusion species in north-east Africa are Imperial *Aquila beliaca*, Spotted *A. clanga*, Lesser Spotted *A. pomarina*, Steppe *A. nipalensis* and Tawny Eagles *A. rapax*. Imperial is almost as large and as broad of wing but adults are generally darker or black, whilst immatures are conversely paler, a creamy-buff on the body and wings except the black flight feathers and tail, with broad pale panels on the inner primaries. In flight, adults are much heavier-looking and show a long, parallel wingshape with long narrow tail held closed; immatures show subtle differences in flight and wingshape with a bulging edge to the secondaries and, when soaring, a spread tail. Flight silhouette is flat when soaring but often glides with a slightly raised arm and level primaries (hand).

Spotted and Lesser Spotted Eagles

Both Spotted and Lesser Spotted Eagles are smaller in build and body size than Golden, although the latter can appear smaller than in reality, especially lone birds without a size comparison. In flight, Spotted has shorter or more compact, but broader wings (often

appearing almost square-shaped), the tail is also much shorter and broader than Golden. Flight is on flat wings with primary tips raised or with the primaries drooping. Lesser Spotted is slightly smaller and lighter built than Spotted with longer, more uniform wings; the wingshape similar to but longer than Spotted, with downward slanting or arched hand; the tail is generally slightly longer than Spotted but shorter than Golden (which only in fresh plumage can be as long as Lesser Spotted). Both Spotted and Lesser Spotted are best identified by a combination of plumage and structural features. Immature Lesser Spotted shows pale or whitish bases and shafts to the inner primaries and uppertail coverts are pale or whitish. This plumage is similar to immature and subadult Golden but, as can be seen in the photograph, is often more prominent on Golden. Whilst the pale bases to the inner primaries on Golden decrease in size with age, the white base to the tail is often present in birds in their fifth or sixth calendar year.

Steppe and Tawny Eagles

Steppe and Tawny Eagles (both common in Ethiopia) have more slender wingshapes than Golden. Tawny is generally paler on the body and wing coverts, contrasting with the black wings and tail, with large pale panels on the inner primaries and a pale rump. Immature Steppe is distinguished by broad white bases on the underwing primary and greater coverts, which are completely lacking on Golden. Adult Steppe is uniform dark brown, though many show vestiges of immature plumage at the base of the inner primaries and underwing. Flight shape is very similar to Golden but the hand is generally less broad, presenting a more accentuated S-bend to the rear edge of the wing and the pinched-in effect of the rear edge of the secondaries, whilst a more graduated or less prominent gap between the body and the wings is present; the tail is slightly shorter on Steppe, but broader at the base and rarely gives the same impression of length or shape as Golden. The flight silhouette is usually flat and, whilst wings may be parallel, the hand is often bent back from the carpal.

Distribution in Africa and the Middle East

These records represent a considerable extension of the Golden Eagle's range in Africa, and are the most southerly in the world. The species is a scarce resident in mountains from Morocco to Tunisia, principally in the Atlas, and discontinuously through Mauretania and the Air and Ahaggar ranges of southern Algeria. *A. c. bomeyeri*, which ranges north into Spain and east to

Crete, Turkey, the Caucasus and south to Israel and north-west Saudi Arabia, is slightly smaller, darker and duller than nominate birds, and in north-east Africa are relatively little known. Étchécopar & Hüe² report that some birds cross the Sahara; if so, the birds in southern Algeria and Mauretania may only be winter visitors.

The closest area from which the Ethiopian population could have originated is western Saudi Arabia, where it occurs in a small area of the Hejaz mountains, east of Jeddah¹. Throughout its Middle Eastern range, the species is a scarce and little-known resident; Jennings³ reported that it was suspected of breeding in North Yemen.

Status, ecology and conservation in Ethiopia

With records from two areas in the central and southern highlands of Ethiopia, it is extremely likely that further fieldwork will reveal more Golden Eagles in other areas. There appears to be an ample supply of prey at high altitude, notably an abundance of rodents *Stenocephalemys albocaudata*, *S. griseicauda*, *Arvicantthis blicki* and *Otomys typus*, with small numbers of Rock Hyrax *Procapra capensis* and Klipspringer *Oreotragus oreotragus*. There is also a variety of suitable bird species prey, most notably Clapperton's *Francolinus clappertoni*, Chestnut-naped *F. castaneicollis* and Montane Francolins *F. psilolaemus*.

The area of the Bale Mountains, which appears to be the eagles' stronghold, is a National Park, but the effects of the former civil war have rendered this status virtually redundant. In recent years fences have been broken, permitting goats and cattle to graze freely over large areas of upland grassland. A small percentage of these animals may also be utilised as prey species by large birds of prey. Species such as the rare Mountain Nyala *Tragelaphus buxtoni* and Bohor Reedbuck *Redunca redunca* are greatly reduced in number and distribution than they were formerly. The additional effects of a lack of immunity to diseases, spread from domestic animals, is unknown.

With the cessation of the civil war in Ethiopia and the rebirth of tourism in parts of the central and southern highlands, it is hoped that further records will add to our knowledge of the Golden Eagle's ecology in Ethiopia, and that detailed work will reveal its true distribution.

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New observations of a Zairean endemic: Prigogine's Greenbul *Chlorocichla prigoginei*

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Between 1993–1994, Marc Languy, Laurent Esselen and the author were resident in Goma, eastern Zaïre (now Democratic Republic of Congo). Situated in the centre of the Albertine Rift, this base provided an excellent opportunity to visit many sites within the Rift. During 6–8 February 1994, we visited the Lendu



Plate 1. Prigogine's Greenbul *Chlorocichla prigoginei* site in the Djuju Forest, Lendu Plateau, Zaïre, February 1994 (Laurent Esselen).



Plate 2. Dusky Crimsonwing *Cryptospiza jacksoni*, Djuju Forest, Lendu Plateau, Zaïre, February 1994 (Laurent Esselen).

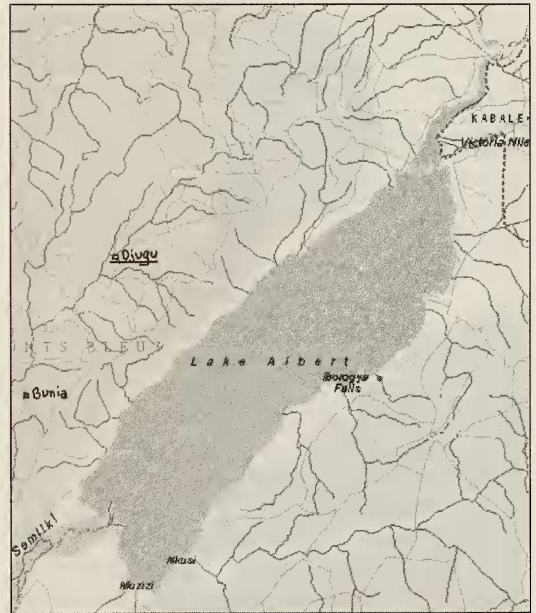


Fig 1. Map of the Lendu Plateau.

Plateau, an isolated highland region, west of Lake Albert (formerly Lake Mobutu) with the specific objective of observing two poorly known species, Chapin's (White-browed) Crombec *Sylvietta (leucophrys) chapini* and Prigogine's Greenbul *Chlorocichla prigoginei*, although the former may prove to be a form of White-browed Crombec *Sylvietta leucophrys*²; further field investigation is needed before accepting this form as a valid species. Chapin's Crombec is known only from the Lendu Plateau, whereas Prigogine's Greenbul is principally known from the Beni-Butembo area, north-west of Lake Edward (formerly Lake Idi Amin), where a total of 14 specimens were collected between 1948 and